

CITY MANAGER MESSAGE: CHARTING A COURSE TO A MORE INCLUSIVE & EQUITABLE COMMUNITY

By Ann Ober, city manager – August 2020 issue of The Milwaukie Pilot newsletter

In response to a national reckoning around race and policing, City Council and I have spent the last eight weeks meeting with our Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) community members about their personal experiences interacting with the City of Milwaukie. The goal of these initial conversations has been to hear directly from our BIPOC community, how to make Milwaukie a place that truly lives up to its vision of being safe and welcoming to all, and to begin charting a course forward. This is going to be hard work. I am committed to engaging in an open dialogue, and creating a safe space for honest, and likely very difficult, conversations. It is my hope that this work will lead to meaningful action and provide guidance for needed changes in myself and the city team.

Based on the discussions at recent meetings, City Council is likely to replace one of its existing goals with an equity goal on Aug. 4. With this action, City Council will direct me to move funding and resources to facilitate a more equitable workplace, and prioritize changes to city services and functions that better serve our BIPOC community. If City Council proceeds with making this a goal, I will begin by hiring a staff person dedicated to this work.

As discussed in Councilor Hyzy's column in this publication, the city will host virtual community meals with our self-identified BIPOC community members in August. These will be facilitated conversations with one held in Spanish. For those who are interested in attending or learning more, I invite you to contact me directly at obera@milwaukieoregon.gov.

I am also working on a mechanism for reviewing city policies with BIPOC community members this fall. The listening sessions will provide input and guidance for how that work is structured, although some initial work has already begun. I will provide more information to the community in the coming weeks and months.

Several internal changes are also underway to help ready our organization to act upon what we learn. All City of Milwaukie managers attended a two-day training led by local diversity, equity and inclusion firm Empress Rules. The city will provide similar training for all full-time employees over the next three months, including our police officers. Members of City Council are also joining us in these trainings.

Six weeks ago, our police department also updated their policies to include a ban on choke holds (located in the neck restraint policy) and documented the city's de-escalation process. Those policies, as well as all other police policies, can be found at

www.milwaukieoregon.gov/police/milwaukie-police-department-lexipol. Please note, the Milwaukie Police Department regularly reviews and modifies their policies to better serve the agency and the community. Check back regularly to assure that you are accessing the most up-to-date information.

This is the start of a long and significant process. City staff will keep the community updated in our Pilot newsletter and on our Facebook account as we proceed.